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Contact:
LaDonna Davis, (540) 678-6526
Ladonna.s.davis@usace.army.mil

AED-North wins best project development team in all of USACE!

KABUL – The Detention Facility in Parwan which was designed and constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has received attention from media outlets around the world including ABC News, Armed Forces Network, The New York Times and The Washington Post for its sophisticated design and strategic alignment with the goals and objectives to provide security for Afghanistan.

The Corps of Engineers team members that designed and built the facility will be given their time to shine when they are awarded The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2011 Project Development Team of the Year during the 2011 Summer Leaders Conference held in New Orleans, on August 1.

The \$43 million Detention Facility in Parwan is located within Bagram Air Base in the village of Bagram.

Construction on the project began in June 2010 and was complete in May, an astonishing 11 months after the notice to proceed. The contractor was Ihsan Qudrat Construction Co./ Prime Projects International Joint Venture.

The success of the DFIP is due to many factors including the urgency by the customer, Combined Joint Interagency Task Force 435- which is the task force created to control detention operations for the United States Department of Defense in Afghanistan- as well as Washington officials to get the project complete on time and in budget. But the one indisputable factor that ultimately led to the nomination and win for the PDT was teamwork said Harry Pham, who was one of the project managers on the team and is deployed to Afghanistan from the Los Angeles District Corps of Engineers.

“We had support from the upper management, a good contractor in place and the location was pretty much secure,” Pham said. “But what made us really successful was that we had a good PDT that came together to make this a priority and did their part to pull the project together and make it successful.”

A project development team is made up by a group of architects, project and program managers, engineers, lawyers and construction representatives who all come together to design and construct USACE projects. The PDT of the year was comprised of nearly 30 members who all work or worked for the Afghanistan Engineer District- North.

Overcoming obstacles such as a fast paced design and construction schedule, complications of working in a war- time environment and funding issues is what made the project team the premiere project team in all of USACE.

The emphasis of the detention facility is on rehabilitation and release of detainees according to the CJTF-435 website. The facility offers extensive medical care and classes in literacy and trades such as agriculture, bread-making and tailoring. Families are allowed to visit detainees and the facility includes a playground for the detainees' children. Afghan and U.S. authorities report that the recidivism rate of released detainees is less than 2 percent.

The sensitive nature of the project along with the strategic need for a facility like this to be built in order to win the war has made the DFIP one of the most infamous projects in all of Afghanistan.

“It’s a high profile project, high visibility. It seems like everyone has an interest in seeing this project succeed, from D.C. to the minister of local government in Afghanistan and of course our [Corps] district and headquarters,” Pham said. “This [facility] is part of the overarching goals for the war – to capture the insurgents and Taliban and concentrate them in one area.”

The DFIP features three detention housing units for low-risk and high-risk detainees, with appropriate security measures to include catwalks, fencing, lighting and guard towers. Additionally, it features necessary communications, electrical, sewers and drainage systems. The facility meets Geneva Convention requirements and accommodates Afghan customs. For instance, many of the cells are 30-men holding units, allowing detainees to retain their traditional sense of community.

Completing a project of its size in less than a year was no small feat and a rarity for any organization in a warzone. In comparison the average Afghan National Police or Afghan National Army facility can take anywhere from a year to a year-in-a-half to complete.

But meeting any and all challenges head on while coming up with innovative solutions to problems helped the team not only come in on budget, but to deliver two out of three phases ahead of schedule.

Aaron Rader, the on-site project engineer and contracting officer representative for the DFIP accredited the team’s achievements to “having a great partnership.” “We have a solid team here in Bagram, a quality contractor that was willing to work with us and put in the resources to finish the job on time, great reach back support in engineering and construction, our district leadership supported us with overtime requests, and the customer has been willing to work with us and has been very understanding of any minor setbacks.”

Setbacks, such as funding delays could have turned in to major problems if it wasn’t for the team’s innovation and initiative.

During the initial scope of work, it was determined that the project would cost between \$40 million to \$50 million, but with only an initial obligation amount of \$30 million, the PDT had to come up with an innovative way to keep the project moving until more funding became available. In order to accomplish that goal, the team developed an incremental spending strategy and phased delivery which allowed for the award of the majority of critical DFIP facilities needed and various options as additional funding became available. The flexible, forward leaning strategy

pre-positioned the ability of awarding the contract/project successfully. The team was able to award the entire project, both base and optional items, for a total of \$43 million as additional funding became available

“We accomplished our mission to deliver a quality project on time and the end user was able to accept the facility with minimum deficiency or delay,” Pham said.

Maj. Jeffery Floyd, logistics officer for the 435th Task Force Protector at the DFIP couldn’t agree more.

“The work that the Corps did on this project is really outstanding,” Floyd said. “When we had our final inspection, there were minimal deficiencies which allowed us to start housing inmates immediately and start putting the facility to use. That has only happened on four facilities built here at Bagram, and three of them were the facilities built by the Corps of Engineers for the DFIP.”

Having the team’s hard work recognized by USACE only adds to the sense of accomplishment that the team already feels said Rader. “I was surprised when I heard that we won the award but it was validation of all the hard work that a lot of people put in to this project to make it happen,” he said.

Pham agrees.

“The team deserves this award because of all the hard work they’ve done and the contractor did a great job too,” Pham said. “It feels great!”